

March 9, 2015

Governor Mark Dayton  
Office of the Governor & Lt Governor  
116 Veterans Service Building  
20 W 12th Street  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Commissioner Tom Landwehr, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Office of the Commissioner  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

Commissioner Dr. Edward Ehlinger, Minnesota Department of Health  
Office of the Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Public Health  
P.O. BOX 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Commissioner John Linc Stine, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Office of the Commissioner  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
520 Lafayette Road N  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

RE: PolyMet NorthMet Sulfide Mining - Assessment of Health Effects

Dear Governor Dayton, Commissioners:

This letter is in reference to the proposed sulfide mining reports in northern Minnesota, particularly the PolyMet Project now under environmental review. We, as Lake Superior Chapter members of the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, would like to add our voice to our colleagues at the Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Public Health Association and other medical professionals to request a comprehensive analysis of the health risks and public health impacts related to sulfide mining. We invite further dialogue with you and your Commissioners on this important health concern.

As Family Physicians, we have a front row seat to view the health of our patients and our community. We care for infants, elders, and all ages in between. We have chosen to speak out on this important issue in our region because the toxins and pollutants created by sulfide mining affect the health of our patients across their lifespans.

We are asking you to require that additional detailed and accurate scientific information be developed to help us understand about how the proposed NorthMet copper/nickel mine project, and others like it, will contribute to the amount of mercury, a neurotoxin, in our environment and our bodies. Additionally, we are concerned about additional contaminants and toxins related to this type of mining activity, such as arsenic and manganese.

We are not toxicologists, hydrologists or engineers. Like many of our neighbors, we had faith in the regulatory process. However, after reviewing the March 2014 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, we were troubled by the lack of detail pertaining to human health effects in the document. We know that sulfide mining involves five of the ten World Health Organization's "top ten chemicals of major public health concern" including mercury, arsenic, lead, asbestos and air pollution. These chemicals can cause illness and disease in our patients.

We also already know that our region is affected by mercury. A recent study by the Minnesota Department of Health found that one out of ten newborn babies in the Minnesota Lake Superior Basin has unsafe levels of mercury in his or her blood. Studies have shown that even *low* levels of mercury exposure in the prenatal period affect brain function. Consequently, we are concerned that even a small addition of mercury exposure prenatally and during childhood development could have lifelong and far-reaching impacts on the next generation of Northlanders.

We join our colleagues in the fields of medicine, nursing, and public health as well as our state Health Department to advocate for the health of our region. A health risk assessment and a health impact assessment are the next critical steps in understanding both the short and long term consequences that PolyMet's NorthMet project may have on our health.

Governor Dayton, we would respectfully request a chance to meet with you and your Commissioners in person in order to better communicate our concerns. Please contact Emily Onello, MD at (218) 724-1269 or Kris Wegerson, MD at (218) 343-1445 to help us find a time that is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

Concerned Family Doctors from the Lake Superior Chapter of the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians